

February 17, 2010

Members of the Appropriation Committee I would like to thank you for the opportunity to share the importance of continued employment with the International Festival of Arts and Ideas.

My name is Denise Santisteban and I am the Ideas Program Manager for the International Festival of Arts & Ideas. This year will mark my 14th year with the Festival. I moved to Connecticut from the San Francisco Bay area where I worked as a professional stage manager. As my family began to settle into the New Haven area and I started looking for work I was told check out the International Festival of Arts & Ideas. It was a bit different from the world of theater but it enabled me to continue working in the arts which was and is an important component of my life. I know this feeling is shared by many of my colleagues who also work at the Festival every summer.

As many of you know, working in the arts is not always the most profitable of professions. Many of us piece together jobs to make ends meet and working at the Festival has provided us reliable employment every year. I know many of the seasonal employees view the Festival as a regular employer and work their schedules to include it as part of their yearly income.

Another important component of my life is my family. The seasonal employment of the Festival benefited me the time to raise my then four year-old daughter. I work hard during Festival season and it has always been a comfort to know I had the flexibility to be around when my daughter needed me most. My daughter is now a 17 year-old teenager who also works for the Festival. The fact that she has a summertime job during a time when employment for our youth in the community has dwindled should not be overlooked.

Most importantly, the Festival of Arts & Ideas is my main income every year. In the past few years what with the economic downturn it has become my only income as it has become increasingly harder to find jobs to fill in the rest of the months when I am not at the Festival. To lose this income which helps to provide for my family would be an economic hardship and with a child who is about to start looking at colleges I am even more worried about no longer having a viable employer.

So while you consider the budget and the cuts you feel are necessary I urge to remember that those numbers represent people who rely on an organization as an employer and an integral part of their income. Please hold strongly to the values you set forth at the beginning of this budget process and continue to support a valuable asset to the state and its taxpayers.

Thank you for listening.

Sincerely,

Denise Santisteban